

International Trade Union Confederation

Policy proposals to the High Level Forum on Employment and Social policy, (24 November, 2011, Hanoi)

ASEM needs to play a key role in concrete measures to achieve recovery, to reduce the social impact of the unprecedented economic, employment and climate crises and to promote the implementation of the ILO Global Jobs Pact. The ASEM Ministers must work together to devise strong, effective and coordinated economic recovery programmes that put employment creation on top of the agenda. The trade unions believe that ASEM needs to put strong emphasis on the establishment of a Social Protection Floor and introduce projects on social protection to assist ASEM partners to reinforce social protection systems. Moreover, the ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference is urged to actively engage in promoting an environmentally sustainable economic model through investment in new skills and practices and the creation of green jobs. Furthermore, a comprehensive agenda on youth employment and the better connection of education and labour market should be addressed. Conclusively, ASEM partners must provide space for the participation of democratic and representative trade union organisations in ASEM by agreeing on a new body with consultative responsibilities as a counterpart to the Asia Europe Business Forum. The Ministers should call for and establish an ASEM Labour Forum in order to hold an effective dialogue with representatives of the workers of the region.

Advancing the ILO Global Jobs Pact and addressing the economic crisis with the advancement of Decent Work

"[The Leaders] agreed to promote decent work by spurring job creation and labor participation. They reiterated their support for the Global Jobs Pact of the ILO adopted in June 2009, which promotes practical measures to help recover from the crisis and stimulates "growth with employment".

Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting

"Crisis and recovery should not undermine efforts to implement the Decent Work Agenda and the ILO's Global Jobs Pact which contains a wide menu of options to foster decent work. We reaffirm our previous commitments that the internationally recognised ILO core labour standards should be fully respected and effectively implemented."

Leiden Declaration of LEMC3

The ITUC urges the ASEM Labour and Employment SOM to prepare the ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers' Conference (LEMC) to implement the ILO Global Jobs Pact and promote the delivery of Decent Work National Plans. The developed ASEM partners should provide technical assistance on the implementation of such policies starting with productivity-enhancing measures and human resources development programmes. ASEM partners should increase workers' legislative protection by ratifying the ILO Conventions of internationally recognised labour standards and take measures to ensure the effective application and enforcement of law through labour inspections and effective measures against offenders.

Building up the capacity for social protection

"Leaders also noted with interest the gradual development of a global Social Protection Floor, [which] would seek to ensure livelihood security for poor and vulnerable populations and provide access to essential services, fighting persistent poverty effectively. Leaders called for further sharing of experiences and for technical assistance in implementing social welfare policies."

Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting

“There is a growing consciousness of the benefits of social protection as a measure to protect people from becoming trapped in debilitating poverty, to empower them to seize opportunities, to help workers to adjust to changes and to deal with unemployment and thus support productivity”

Leiden Declaration of LEMC3

Trade unions encourage the ASEM SOM on Employment and Labour to consider to establish broad social protection systems and improve the financial sustainability and the quality of existing ones. The ratification of ILO Convention No. 102 on social protection would considerably help ASEM countries willing to extend social security. ASEM partners should set the goal of achieving a Social Protection Floor with universal access and further develop the issues of coverage of workers performing informal activities. ASEM partners with long experience of social protection should offer their technical assistance to partners which start putting such systems in place. To this end, ASEM partners should also share experiences of active labour market policies (ALMPs), including the provision of worker-friendly employment guidance and vocational training.

Preparing the labour force for the low-carbon economy and new technologies

“Leaders stressed that the inclusiveness of labor markets crucially depends on education, job training and skill development strategies, including vocational training. Partnerships with the private sector may, where applicable, facilitate the preparation of the workforce for future opportunities in strategic sectors such as low-carbon emission industries and green technologies [...]”

Chair’s Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting

ASEM should increase its efforts to promote green and decent jobs within its sphere of actions. However, the transition to a low carbon economy and the development of appropriate technologies and employment risks creating a labour market of two speeds. The skills and qualifications of employees of the older generation are becoming obsolete and many new entrants have not been sufficiently prepared to take up green jobs. With a view to facilitating the adaptation of the labour force to the new technologies and green jobs, trade unions urge the SOM on Employment and Labour to prepare the ASEM Ministers of Labour and Employment for action on green skills. The ASEM LEMC could introduce pilot programmes in partnership with social partners and promote the proliferation of green skills in all enterprises and sectors. Countries which champion the environment-friendly growth could make significant contributions to assist with resources, training methodology and curricula in countries that lack it. The ASEM Officials should examine incentives’ programmes for enterprises which provide green skills training to their employees. Moreover, the governments should endow unemployed persons with up-skilling in order to help them find job opportunities in the low carbon sector and deliver such training to employees of state-owned enterprises and public services employees.

Putting youth employment in the heart of job-rich recovery efforts

“We recognize the key challenge to better anticipate future needs, create opportunities for upgrading skills, better match workers’ skills with changing needs of the labour market and to facilitate transitions between jobs and from education to work for young people.”

Leiden Declaration of LEMC3

Young workers are more often unemployed than adult workers but also they are more often employed in precarious, informal and part-time jobs. In Europe, young people are the hardest hit by the crisis and the economic recession which exacerbated the obstacles to their access to decent work. In Asia, booming demographics put pressure on governments which need to deliver millions of new jobs every year to accommodate new entrants. The trade unions encourage ASEM partners to start examining youth employment issues and share experiences on improving economic inclusion for young people. ASEM should endeavour to promote understanding on how to better

connect education and labour market, including by updating curricula and provide additional training.

Promoting the inclusion of social partners in ASEM

"Leaders stressed that effective dialogue between social partners should be encouraged in order to promote mutual understanding on issues of productivity, working conditions, remuneration and economic change. Such dialogue also contributes to effective national policy design and implementation."

Chair's Statement of the Eighth Asia – Europe Meeting

"We had an in depth dialogue with social partners and recognise that social partners can play a constructive role in the crisis recovery process. [...] We believe that in the critical years ahead, social dialogue based on mutual trust and shared objectives can prove to be a key management tool to help implement policies to accelerate a job-rich recovery and shape a more inclusive path for the global economy"

Leiden Declaration of LEMC3

Social dialogue is indispensable elements of good governance at both the national and international level. Policies formulated and implemented in cooperation with the social partners promote industrial peace and social stability and have the potential to boost economic and social progress. Conversely, excluding workers from decision-making fosters industrial conflict, particularly at a time of economic crisis and fiscal austerity. Furthermore, trade unions share the same goals with ASEM and they have been engaged informally and on their own cost in the process since its very beginning in 1996. The international union movement has been convening before every major ASEM meeting and in many occasions met with Leaders and Ministers to explain to them the union priorities and concerns. The unions welcomed the establishment of the Social Partners' Consultation process and urge ASEM partners to set up an Asia Europe Labour Forum, in the standards of the ASEM Business Forum. Such an official structure not only would make dialogue more inclusive but would also bring in the relevant experience of trade unions on issues of employment and social affairs and increase ownership of ASEM's work.